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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000347

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF AND AF/E  
STATE ALSO PASS USAID  
NAIROBI FOR REDSO DIRECTOR ANDREW SISSON  
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KHIV](#) [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: LAUNCH OF U.S. REGIONAL "ROADS" HIV/AIDS PROGRAM  
IN DJIBOUTI

11. (U) USAID and U.S. Embassy in Djibouti launched March 2 its regional HIV/AIDS program in Djibouti entitled the "ROADS Project." The "ROADS Project" supports local activities to mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS. It is principally funded by the Regional Economic Development Support Office (REDSO), with additional funds from USAID/Djibouti. The main feature of the "ROADS Project" is the "Safe-T-Stop", a package of services the program will provide at the target PK12 truck stop, located along the main transport corridor between the port of Djibouti and Addis Ababa. The package includes improved health services such as counseling and testing, as well as improved treatment for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). The project also includes communication messages targeting vulnerable groups like women, youth and truck drivers, informing them of risks as well as options for a healthy life, and multi-sector planning to improve relations among different community groups by creating a dialogue among truckers and local community members, as well as between youth and community leaders.

12. (U) The launch took place at the PK 12 truck stop. Ambassador Ragsdale, Minister of Health Abdallah Abdullahi Miguil, Nairobi-based REDSO Director Andrew Sisson, USAID Representative in Djibouti Janet Schulman, the National Director of Djibouti's HIV/AIDS program, a representative of Family Health International (FHI) and the Director of the PK 12 community association participated in the launch. The ceremony began with a truck parade that included a truck filled with members of the Djiboutian truck drivers' association, sporting a large banner that read "Safe-T-Stop," the official logo of the ROADS project.

13. (U) In his role as master of ceremony, the FHI Country Program Director made opening remarks about the new program and its collaborative effort with the government of Djibouti. He also pointed out the large, yellow billboard along the side of the road, with the "Safe-T-Stop" logo in English on one side and in French on the other. This billboard, he said, will be a constant reminder to truckers and community members of services provided and of HIV/AIDS awareness. In his turn, REDSO Director thanked FHI and the Government of Djibouti for starting this latest project and said the project had already brought hope to thousands of people in other countries. REDSO Director expressed the belief that it would do the same for the people of Djibouti.

14. (U) Ambassador thanked the Government of Djibouti for its partnership with the U.S. in improving health and education in the country. She said progress in development could not be realized without addressing the problem of HIV/AIDS. She added that the ROADS project, with its "Safe-T-Stop" theme would be a value added to the overall HIV/AIDS program in Djibouti, targeting vulnerable populations, and helping preserve the gains already made by the government.

15. (U) The Minister of Health closed the ceremony by thanking USAID, FHI and the National Aids Program Director for launching a program aimed at improving the condition and knowledge of at-risk populations living along the transport corridor between Djibouti and Ethiopia. He told the community members that their role is not to stand by passively and wait for services, but to engage actively in educating neighbors, protecting themselves, and going to clinics for testing and treatment, as necessary. He ended by thanking both REDSO Director and Ambassador for their continuing support and said he hoped the "Safe-T-Stop" would soon find its way to other at-risk communities along the corridor.

16. (U) COMMENT: USAID intends that this program compliment existing programs launched by the government of Djibouti and will make every effort to avoid duplication as well as leverage its position to further other important HIV/AIDS activities. These include development of a surveillance system. Since 2003, Djibouti has received over USD 19,000,000 in funding (World Bank and Global Fund) to support HIV/AIDS programs. To date, however, no reliable information on HIV prevalence or AIDS-related deaths exists. USAID will work closely with both the Minister of Health and Djibouti's

National AIDS Director to remedy this deficiency as this important information will be needed for future planning once current resources have been implemented. End Comment.  
RAGSDALE